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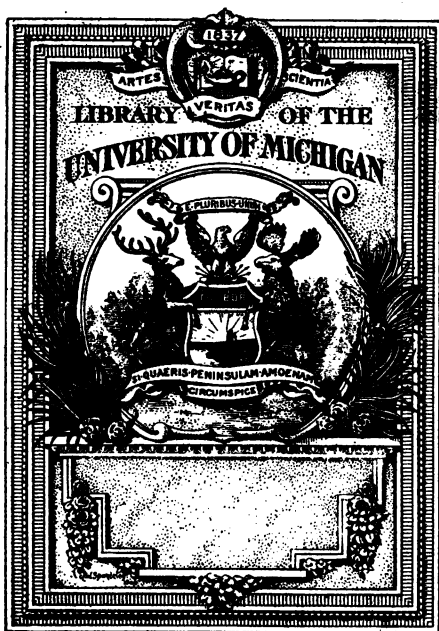
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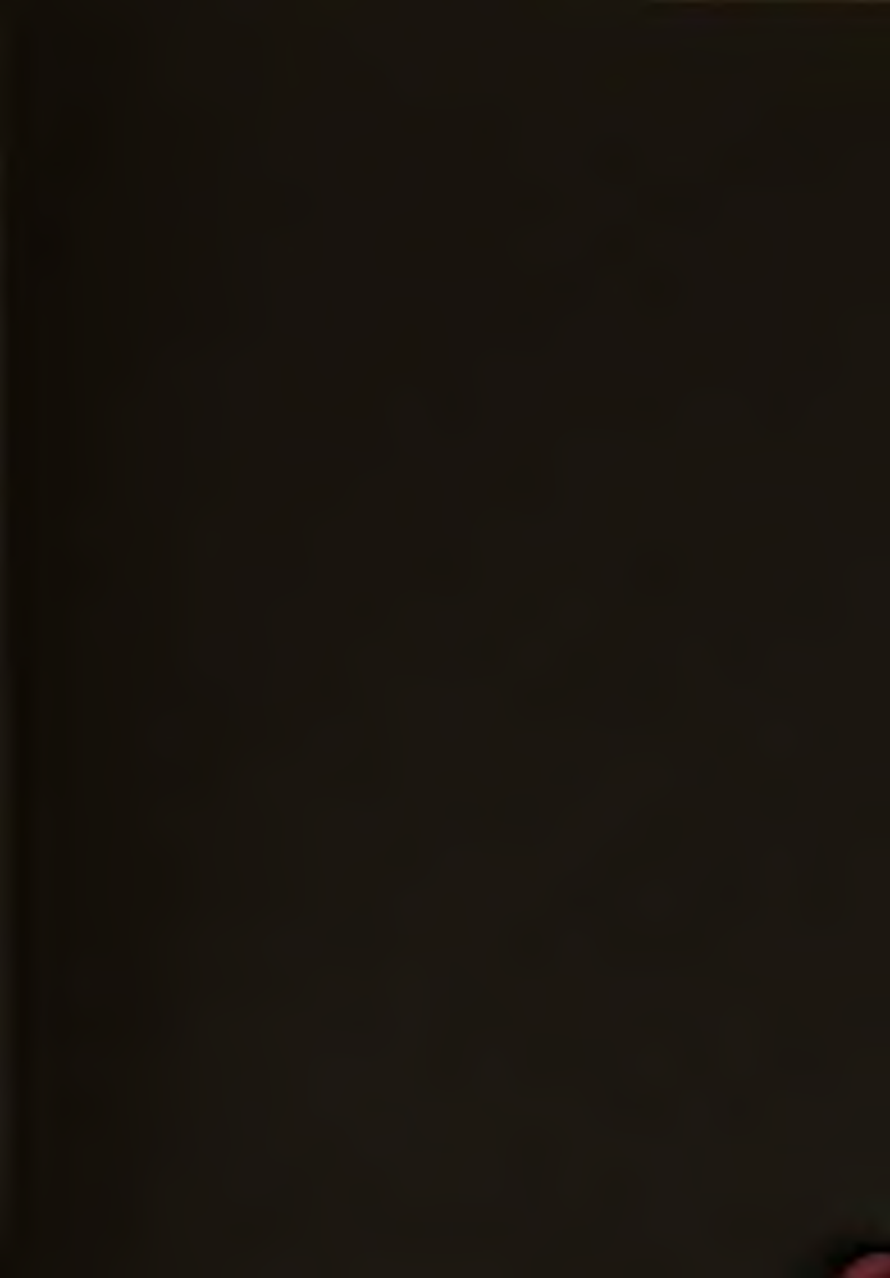
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INTERLUDES

INTERLUDES

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BY

ALFRED AUSTIN

AUTHOR OF 'THE SEASON,' THE 'GOLDEN AGE,' ETC.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS

EDINBURGH AND LONDON

MDCCCLXXII



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P R E F A C E.

THE author has no expectation that the contents of this little volume, a portion of which will perhaps not be altogether new to some of his readers, will commend themselves to that esoteric circle which just now labours with such conspicuous energy, and for the moment not without success, to direct public opinion in matters of literature and art. He trusts that none of his poems are quaint, and he is confident that none of them are profound; and, like the long and goodly ancestry whose imperishable simplicity they humbly seek to

imitate, they are addressed, not to superior people, but to the whole world.

It is this larger and more liberal audience he would beg to remind that the very title given to these poems not only declares them to be unpretending, but implies that they are the precursors of a more soaring project. He nourishes the hope that in another year he may be able to submit to it that project in its completed form; but however ambitious may then seem to be its scope, or however comprehensive its design, he shall consider that he has utterly failed as a poet, if, on that occasion equally as on this, his ideas, sentiments, and language, do not prove intelligible to the simplest understanding, so only, it be instructed by a feeling heart.

May-day, 1872.

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INTERLUDES.

A BIRTHDAY.

THE love within my heart that dwells
Knows nought of days or hours ;
I hear thee in the Christmas bells,
I feel thee in the vernal showers ;
And thy breath is blent with the wandering
scent
Of the summer fruits and flowers.

And yet this morn my blood is stirred
 With more than wonted glow ;
Thy absent voice is strangely heard,
 Thy spells upon me stronger grow ;
And my spirit sips from unseen lips
 That can be but thine, I know.

For thou wast born upon this day,
 When I was but a child,
Ere winter frosts were ta'en away,
 Ere primroses peeped out and smiled ;
Ere the snows were reft from the sheltering cleft,
 And the winds were high and wild.

Thus early unto me wast thou
 An earnest of the spring ;
Of happy birds upon the bough,
 And sweet trees blossoming ;
Of all that is fair upon earth, in air,
 And the streams that bound and sing.

I wonder what the world was like
 Before thou didst appear—
Did young lambs skip o'er mound and dyke?
 Did throstles warble loud and clear?
And were sea and sky as deep and high
 As they are now thou art here?

It were a dreary world indeed
 To me, wert thou away;
The night no tumults sweet would breed,
 No tranquil dalliance the day;
And though earth should fling all that Fame can bring
 At my feet, I would not stay.

So, though sore-severed still we be,
 Here, helpful one, remain!
Through travels long a bourne to me,
 A crowning joy 'mid crushing pain;
An abiding star when the storm-waves jar,
 And a rainbow 'mid the rain.

And fear not, sweet, but love like ours

Will keep us ever young :

No prey to the corroding hours,

No feast for the malignant tongue,

But as firm and fond in the years beyond

As when first we clasped and clung.

Age cannot touch such charms as thine ;

My heart defies the sun :

Both shall but glow yet more divine,

His course more oft as he may run :

Till we spurn the earth for that second birth,

When we twain shall be only one.

LOST.

SWEET lark ! that, bedded in the tangled grass,
Protractest dewy slumbers, wake, arise !
The brightest moments of the morning pass—
Thou shouldst be up, and carolling in the skies.
Go up ! go up ! and melt into the blue,
And to heaven's veil on wings of song repair ;
But, ere thou dost descend to earth, peep through,
And see if She be there.

Sweet stockdove ! cooing in the flushing wood,
On one green bough brooding till morn hath died,
Oh, leave the perch where thou too long hast stood,
And with strong wings flutter the leaves aside !

Fly on, fly on, past feathery copse, nor stay
Till thou hast skimmed o'er all the woodlands fair !
And when thou hast, then speeding back thy way,
Tell me if She be there.

Sweet breeze ! that, wearied with the heat of noon,
Upon a bank of daffodils didst die,
Oh, if thou lov'st me, quit thy perfumed swoon,
And, all refreshed, hither and thither hie.
Traverse the glades where browse the dappled deer,
Thrid the deep dells where none but thou mayst
dare ;
And then, sweet breeze, returning, to my ear
Whisper if She be there.

Sweet rivulet ! running far too fast to stay,
Yet hear my plaint, e'en as thou rollest on !
I am alone—alone—both night and day,
For she I love was with me, and is gone.

Oh, shouldst thou find her on the golden beach
Whither thou speedest ocean's joys to share,
Remount thy course, despite what sophists teach,
And tell me She is there.

Not there ! Nor there ! Not in the far-off sky,
Close-keeping woods, or by the shining sea !
When lark, dove, breeze, and rivulet vainly try
To find my sweet—oh, where then may she be ?
Hath she then left me—me she vowed so dear,
And she whose shadow dusks all other charms ?
O foolish messengers ! Look, look ! She's here,
Enfolded in my arms !

LADY MABEL.

SIDE by side with Lady Mabel
Sate I, with the sunshade down ;
In the distance hummed the Babel
Of the many-footed town ;
There we sate with looks unstable—
Now of tenderness, of frown.

“Must we part? or may I linger?
Wax the shadows, wanes the day.”
Then, with voice of sweetest singer
That hath all but died away,
“Go,” she said ; but tightened finger
Said articulately, “Stay !”

Face to face with Lady Mabel,
 With the gauzy curtains drawn,
Till a sense I am unable
 To portray began to dawn ;
Till the slant sun flung the gable
 Far athwart the sleepy lawn.

“ Now I go. Adieu, adieu, love !
 This is weakness ; sweet, be strong.
Comes the footfall of the dew, love !
 Philomel’s reminding song.”
“ Go,” she said ; “ but I go too, love !
 Go with you, my life along !”

Breast to breast with Lady Mabel,
 Shrouded by the courteous night,
Baffling all the forms of fable
 To describe our dreams aright ;
And as pure as gifts of Abel,
 In the Omnipresent sight.

S O N N E T.

WHEN in the long-drawn avenues of Thought
I halt, and look before me and behind,
And seek what erst I all too little sought,
Some spot secure of rest, I do not find.
Retrace my steps I dare not, lest each nook
I late rejected should reject me now,
And sweetest arbours, restlessly forsook,
No more be prone their leafage to allow.
So to the untrod distance do I strain,
Which seemeth ever further to extend ;
Desiring oft, in irritable pain,
Premature sleep would bring that settled End,
When I shall know it all, or else forget
This far too little which for more doth fret.

FREE.

Joy ! Free, at last, from vulgar thrall :
No longer need my voice be dumb ;
And quicker far than thou canst call,
O Italy, I come !

To feel me the adopted heir
Of Art and Nature wed and blent,
In days of trouble routed care ;
In these will bring content.

To know the world is not a mart,
The soul a lackey, life a shame,
Will scare the past, allay its smart,
Almost annul the blame.

Away with all these makeshift toys,
Provisional for heart and sense,
Which kept a useful equipoise
'Gainst sheer indifference !

'Twas well enough, whilst ill at ease,
To parley with each passing whim,
Which, though accredited to please,
Was pleasure's pseudonym.

And if one pleasure lure me still—
Just one—I scarcely can but thank,
'Twere wisdom not to linger till
It, like the rest, be rank.

Bear me, rough breakers, swiftly on !
Yield, mist-wrapped mountains, passage through ;
I fret, I fever, to be gone
To skies and waters blue :

Where, loosed from trammels, one may still
Complete the functions fettered here ;
Heart unsuborned, unbiassed will,
And intellect sincere.

My senses with my spirit meet
To urge me from this northern soil,
Ere stealthy Winter's ambushed sleet
Swoop on autumnal spoil.

The sickle hath performed its work,
The storm-gusts sweep the aspens bare,
Careering clouds and shadows mirk
Cower the disheartened air.

No swallow circles round the roof,
No chirp redeems the dripping shed ;
The very gables frown reproof—
Why not already fled ?

I fly. Decked forms and landscape bare,
Enticements robbed of every spell,
Frivolities no longer fair,
Ye bubbles all, farewell !



AT SHELLEY'S GRAVE.¹

BENEATH this marble, mute of praise,
Is hushed the heart of One
Who, whilst it beat, had eagle's gaze
To stare upon the sun.
Equal in flight
To any height,
He lies where they that crawl but come,
Sleeping most sound,—*Cor Cordium.*

No rippling notes announcing spring,
No bloom-evoking breeze,
No fleecy clouds that earnest bring
Of summer on the seas,

Avail to wake
The heart whose ache
Was to be tender overmuch
To Nature's every tone and touch.

The insolence of stranger drum,
Vexing the broad blue air,
To smite a nation's clamour dumb,
Or spur a rash despair,
Which once had wrung
That prophet tongue
To challenge force or cheer the slave,
Rolls unrebuked around his grave.

The cruel clarion's senseless bray,
The lamb's half-human bleat,
Patter of shower on sward or spray,
Or clang of mailed feet,
Are weak alike
To stir or strike

The once swift voice that now is dumb
To war's reveil, cicala's hum.

Oh wake, dead heart ! come back ! indeed
Come back ! Thy thunderous brow
And levin-shafts the world did need
Never so much as now.

The chain, the rack,
The hopes kept back
By those whom serfs are forced to trust,
Might well reanimate thy dust.

Nay, Poet, rest thou quiet there,
'Neath sunshine, wind, and rain ;
At least if thou canst scarce repair,
Thou dost not share our pain.

It is enough
That cold rebuff
And calumny of knave and dunce
Did vex thy tender spirit once.

Where was the marvel, though thy corse
Submitted to the pyre,
Thy heart of hearts should foil the force
Of the sea-wind-blown fire?

It was but just
That what was dust
Should own the cradle whence it came—
But when did flame e'er feed on flame?

Or rather say the sacred torch,
The while it did illume
Thy heart, did also so far scorch,
Was nought left to consume?
That ardent zeal
For human weal
Had searched and parched it o'er and o'er,
Till, lava-like, 'twould burn no more.

I snatch the banner from thy grave,
I wave the torch on high ;

'Spite smiling tyrant, crouching slave,
The Cause shall never die !
Sceptre and cowl
May smite or scowl,
Serfs hug the chains they half deserve—
Right cannot miss, howe'er it swerve !

Alas ! you failed, who were so strong :
Shall I succeed, so weak ?
Life grows still shorter, art more long ;
You sang—I scarce can speak.
Promethean fire
Within your lyre
Made manly words with music mate,
Whilst I am scarce articulate.

He sang too early to be heard ;
The world is dròwsy still ;
And only those whose sleep is stirred
By lines that streak the hill,

Or the first notes
Of matin throats,
Have heard his strain 'mid hush of night,
And known it harbinger of Light.

But when the Day shall come whose dawn
He early did forbode,
When men by Knowledge shall be drawn,
Not driven by the goad,
This spot apart,
Where sleeps his heart,
Deaf to all clamour, wrong, or rage,
Shall be their choicest pilgrimage.

ROME, *April* 1863.

ALEA JACTA.

DEAREST, I know thee wise and good,
Beloved by all the best ;
With fancy like Ithuriel's spear,
A judgment proof 'gainst rage or fear,
Heart firm through many a stormy year,
And conscience calm in rest.

Why should I let my wayward feet
Cross the fair threshold of thy life ?
My hopes and cares of little worth
Drag down thy heavenlier part to earth,
And, like strange discord marring mirth,
Fill thy sweet soul with strife ?

But though such fears will cloud my brain,
Nay, though stern Time their truth should prove,
Yet none the less I bid thee take
My life into thine own, forsake
Thy high heart, bid it beat and break,
Like mine, but, like mine, love !



LET THE WEARY WORLD GO ROUND.

LET the weary world go round !

What care I ?

Life's a surfeiting of sound :

I would die.

It would be so sweet to lie

Under waving grasses,

Where a maiden's footstep sly,

Tremulous for a lover nigh,

Sometimes passes.

Why, why remain ?

Graves are the sovereign simples

Against life's pain ;

Graves are the sheltering wimples
 Against life's rain ;
Graves are a mother's dimples
 When we complain.

O Death ! beautiful Death !
 Why do they thee disfigure ?
To me thy touch, thy breath,
 Hath nor alarm nor rigour.
Thee do I long await ;
I think thee very late ;
 I pine much to be going.
Others have gone before ;
I hunger more and more
 To know what they are knowing.

Heart, heart ! be thou content !
Accept thy banishment ;

Like other sorrows, life will end for thee.

Yet for a little while

Bear with this harsh exile,

And Death will soften and will send for thee.



IF I TO YOU BUT SORROW BRING.

IF I to you but sorrow bring,
But aching hours and brackish tears,
And that poor drooping Hope whose wing
Flags 'neath the weight of clogging fears,
Then let me in the desert hide
This fatal gift, this feverish breast ;
Or, better, 'neath the sounding tide
Be hushed, and evermore at rest.

What recks it if at length I lie
In my cold bed of narrow earth,

And neither wave, nor sun, nor sky,
Vex me with its untimely mirth?
Have I not known what 'tis to hold
In pulsing arms your bounding heart?
Oh come, dear Death! and make them cold,
If life can do no more than part!

For even then at times would stir
The veins that now with passion glow,
And I, within my sepulchre,
Anon should warm and conscious grow.
The pulse would throb, the bosom wake,
And crave the joy they once had known,
And 'twere as easy, for your sake,
To find me there, as here, alone.

And then I feel that you would come,
Would pierce the sod, would cleave the wave,

And as my heart was waxing numb,
 Would at my side a pillow crave.
And I should start, and live, and find
 In narrow bounds, but tight embrace,
The bliss Despair had left behind,
 And never thought again to face.

The world is wide, but tell me where,
 Where shall I wander and not see,
See, hear, and feel, on earth, in air,
 Something that doth remind of thee?
If I ascend to heaven, thou
 Wilt be my first, sole seraph there ;
And did I don the demon's brow,
 Wouldst all my dear damnation share !

Not good nor ill, not life nor death,
 Not dark, not light, not joy, not smart,
Not one of these betokeneth
 What unto me thou—loved one—art !

Thou art my first, my last, my all,
What keeps me here, what calls me hence—
At once my freedom and my thrall,
My centre, my circumference !



S O N N E T.

TAKE not the Gods to task, for they are wise
When they refuse no less than when they grant.
Thou canst but know, with all thy bursting sighs,
What is thy whim, but never what thy want.
Did they, to smite thine importunity,
Answer each swift unregulated prayer,
Oh, what accursèd trudger wouldst thou be,
And what a world of fardels have to bear !
Check thy lament. The days will surely come,
Thou wilt regard each crossed or shattered hope,
As now thou dost poor Philip's broken drum,
Or little Rosie's tangled skipping-rope.
Confide in Time, who will, as years expire,
Indulge, or else annihilate, desire.

FONTANA DI TREVI.

WHY do I sit within the spell

Of eyes like thine, who oft have known

What 'tis in Beauty's gaze to dwell,

And then—to feel alone :

Back be remitted to my cell,

Too lately near a throne ?

What though the moon on Trevi's fount,

Whilst we together drink, doth shine,

Can it the rural miles remount,

Or I subtract from mine ?

Whilst Time hath scarce begun to count
The pleasant paths of thine.

How vain to thus divide its wave !
It will not help to blend our own.
Thy voice is gay, but mine is grave,
As thine too will have grown
In days when nought is left thee save
A half-remembered tone.

The light that gilds my world no more,
But only now just breaks on thine ;
Thy shadows stretch all bright before,
Behind in darkness mine.
Leave me my unilluminated shore,
And in thy lustre shine !

Forth to thy Future, gifted child !
Oh, be it fair as thou !

As thy sweet tones and temper mild,
And cloudless as thy brow ;
And thou wilt then be reconciled
That I am silent now !



AT THE LATTICE.

BEHIND the curtain,
With glance uncertain,
Peeps pet Florence as I gaily ride ;
Half demurely,
But, though purely,
Most, most surely
Wishing she were riding, riding by my side.

In leafy alleys,
Where sunlight dallies,
Pleasant were it, bonnie, to be riding rein by rein ;

And where summer tosses,
All about in bosses,
Velvet verdant mosses,
Still more pleasant, surely, to dismount us and remain.

O thou Beauty !
Hanging ripe and fruity
At the muslined lattice in the drooping eve,
Whisper from the casement
If that blushing face meant,
“ At the cottage basement,
Gallant, halt, I come to thee ; I come to never leave.”

But if those coy lashes
Stir for whoso dashes
Past the scented window in the fading light,
Close the lattice, sweetest ;
Darkness were discreetest ;
And, with bridle fleetest,
I will gallop onwards, unattended, through the Night.

EPIGRAM.²

ALTHOUGH no stupid scoffer, I
Am wholly at a loss
To apprehend the reason why
You kiss Lorenzo's Cross.

For though indeed a hundred days'
Indulgence thus you win,
There does not move a lip but says
That you did never sin.

Ha ! but I did not read the whole.

I see it now ; the gain
May be applied to any soul
In purgatorial pain.

And oh, how many spirits lie
In such sad bondage through
Having too often passed it by
Whilst gazing after you !

They longed, instead, your lips to kiss ;
Their wish, though vain, was clear ;
They fondly thought they would by this
Make sure of heaven here.

Indulgence each your lip acquires,
On them it doth bestow ;
And you who lighted here their fires,
Do quench their flames below.

And so you soothe—'tis only fair—
The souls you lately vexed.
'Tis lucky you have grace to spare
For this world and—the next.



THOUGH ALL THE WORLD.

THOUGH all the world should stand aside,
And leave you to your sorrow,
And you from none, or near, or wide,
A smile or tear could borrow ;
I still would stand with arms outspread,
In love and trust unshaken,
To make a nest for that dear head,
By all the rest forsaken.

Come, let me crouch beside your knees,
And we will talk together—

You who have passed o'er stormy seas,
And I through tranquil weather.
What is to me the shallow scoff
Of pert or pious sneerer ?
Let the base crowd move further off,
I only creep the nearer.

Sweet child ! 'tis not your deep blue eyes,
Nor yet your raven tresses,
Nor that strange mystic look, more wise
Than all your mouth expresses :
'Tis not your face, 'tis not your form,
Your accents bright and clever,
Which bind me with a strength enorm,
And make me yours for ever.

And yet, and yet, 'tis all of these,
But oh ! 'tis something rarer,
Makes every pleasing grace more please,
And each fair charm the fairer.

It is because your soul is high,
If your affections lowly,
That I prostrate myself and sigh
Before a shrine too holy.

And if fell clouds quenched girlhood's beam,
And cast their shadow o'er it,
Your lustre now doth brighter seem
For those dark days before it.
Like those fair lamps that change by night
Their radiance with their motion—
Burn low, then fling a flood of light
Athwart the murky ocean.

SONG.

SADDER than lark when lowering
Clouds defend the sky ;
Sadder than wild swan pouring
Death-notes ere it die ;
Sadder than winds imploring
Shelter when storms are high,—
Couldst thou be less than adoring,
More sad were I.

Happy as streamlet flowing
'Twixt banks of heathery peat ;
Happy as murmur going
Through the inclining wheat ;

Happy as mother glowing
Over her little one's feet,—
I am happy in knowing,
Thou'rt mine, my sweet !



T O A R M S ! ³

WORLD! to arms!

Do you shrink?

What! shrink when the hoofs of the Cossack are
crushing

The bosom of mother, the tonsure of priest,
And the youth of a nation, pain-maddened, is rushing
On visible doom, as to tourney or feast?

When the savagest hell-hounds that ever existed

Are hunting the tender and brave of our race,
And the lash of the insolent Tartar is twisted

With mock of defiance, and cracked in your face—

Do you shrink?

World ! to arms !

Do *you* shrink, gallant France, when the blood of a
nation,

Ne'er stinted for *you*, for itself flows in vain ?

Aroused by the might of a grand inspiration,

Avenge with your war-clang the souls of the slain.

If you shrink, may you never know ending or
respite

To strife internecine and factional hate,

Except when the hand of liberticide despot

Imposes on all one opprobrious fate !

France ! to arms !

Do you shrink ?

You ! politic Austria ! now that you only,

If feebly you hesitate, hasten your doom—

Have you yet not discovered that, selfish and lonely,

An Empire but marches blindfold to the tomb ?

Let a penitent sword in sublime vindication
Of Freedom its manifold mischiefs undo :
If you shrink, may the multiplied wrongs of each
nation
You ever have outraged be hurled back on you !
Do you shrink ?

World ! to arms !
O my beautiful Italy ! nought of misgiving
Doth trouble the summons that touches your pride ;
The graves of your slaughtered are fresh, but your
living
Are throbbing to conquer, or sleep at their side.
By your maidens equipped, in whose beauty exult you,
Your sons must make ready with pennon and sheen
To go straight. If you shrink—but I will not insult
you,
Who, often unfortunate, never were mean.
Then, to arms !

World ! to arms !

Do you shrink ?

Shrink ! England ! what ! shrink when intoxicate Tartar,

Deriding your wrath, rides in blood to the waist ?

When the flesh of the virgin, the bones of the martyr,

The breast of the matron, are bared and defaced ?

Do you deem diplomatic frivolities ample

To save you your title of moral and just,

When a horde of ensanguined barbarians trample

Mankind and remonstrance alike in the dust ?

England shrink ?

No ! to arms !

All ! to arms !

Will you wait till behind the impassable rampart

Of winter they laugh at your impotent rage,

And your war-nostrils frozen, your ironclads hampered,

Destruction—then “Order”—shall swoop on the
stage ?

Yes ! the spring will come back, and unbar you the
ocean,

But will not the sinews relax of the slain :

Swift ! to arms ! Set the vengeance-charged tumbrils
in motion,

As dread as God's thunder, as blest as His rain !



S O N N E T.

Look up, desponding hearts ! See, Morning sallies
From out her tents behind the screening hill,
And speeds her glittering lances on the valleys
Where hostile mists, unconscious, slumber still.
Roused from their vain security, they clamber
Up the far slopes and seek the open sky,
Till hill and dale are tinged with gold and amber,
The spoils of victory from those that fly.
Thus when, as though surrendered to the Night,
Men's spirits sleep, shall wakeful Freedom burst

With piercing ray even here, and flood with light
Each skulking nook by loutish custom curst ;
But in the glow of victory will spare,
Turning all ill to good, all foul to fair.

ROME, 1862.



GIVE ME THY HEART.

GIVE me thy heart, I leave thee mine ;
But oh ! till next our pulses meet,
May my fond spirit round thee shine,
Absorb thy soul and guide thy feet,
And then no more my passion pine,
My bosom idly beat.

I have thy pledge, yet take it back
If ever for a moment thou
In sweet resolve shouldst prove less slack
Than I, at parting, leave thee now.

Love's steady light must mark our track,
And not a flickering vow.

But if, when, past this parting ache,
I gaze upon thy face once more,
Thou still Love's burning thirst wouldst slake,
Still to Love's topmost heights wouldst soar ;
Oh ! then my life's full tide shall break
On thee, as on its shore.

CHI È ?⁴

WHEN for a *buonamano*
Cometh, at break of day,
Knock at the *terzo piano*,
A little voice answers, *Chi è ?*
“ I, the *facchino*, awaiting
The bounty of *cara lei*.”
She droppeth a paul through the grating,
And silently steals away.

When, with a long low mumble
Of lips that appear to pray,

There cometh a knock—so humble—

The little voice answers, *Chi è?*

“I, the poor monk.” Just a little

She opens, but nought doth say ;

Gives him *baiocchi* or victual,

And silently steals away.

But when, as the shadows longer

Stretch half athwart the way,

There cometh a knock, much stronger,

The little voice answers, *Chi è?*

And when I answer, *Io!*

No bolts nor bars delay ;

But, with the wild whisper, *Ah Dio!*

We kiss, and we steal away.

MESSALINA.

THE gloss is fading from your hair,
The glamour from your brow ;
The light your eyes were wont to wear
Attracts no gazer now.
O'er sunny forehead, smiling lips,
And cheeks of rosy roundness, slips
A cruel, premature eclipse,
Time should not yet allow.

I think of one whose homestead lies
A stone's-throw from your own,

Who, spite of sorrow in her eyes,
Hath but more comely grown ;
Who, robbed while scarce a four-year's bride,
Of him, her husband, joy and pride,
Whilst yours still labours at your side,
Is lovely, though alone.

For know, 'tis not from loss of state,
Nor e'en from loved one's death,
Nor any stroke of Time or Fate,
That true grace suffereth :
That virtue hath a secret charm,
Age cannot wither, sorrow harm,
Which keepeth even beauty warm
After surcease of breath.

Know, furthermore, that wants debased,
Void restlessness in crime,
Have almost wholly now defaced
What had been spared by Time ;

That, soul shut in, while sense ajar,
Joys which, not mending nature, mar,
Entered, and left you what you are—
A ruin—ere your prime !



BEFORE, BEHIND, AND BEYOND.

O THE sunny days before us, before us, before us,
When all was bright
From holt to height,
And the heavens were shining o'er us ;
When sound and scent, with vision blent,
Wingèd Hope, and perched Content,
Joys that came, and ills that went,
Seemed singing all in chorus.

O the dreary days behind us, behind us, behind us,
When all is dark,
And care, and cark,
Or transient gleams remind us

Of fruitless sighs, averted eyes,
Baffled hopes and loosened ties,
Pain that lingers, time that flies,
And the hot tears come and blind us.

Oh ! is there nought beyond us, beyond us, beyond us,
 When all the dead,
 The changed, the fled,
Will rise, and look as fond as
 Ere Faith put out, and Love in rout,
 Foes with vigour, friends without,
 Pique and rancour, make us doubt
Hoc tolerare pondus ? ⁵

FAREWELL TO ITALY.

INCOMPARABLE Italy, farewell !
Tears not unmanly trespass to the eyes,
From thy soft touch and glance unspeakable
Compelled to turn and suffer other skies.
E'en as I leave thee, the maternal vine
Under the weight of clustering fruitage bends ;
And the plump fig, beyond where tendrils twine,
Shows greener, moister, as the sap ascends.
When I return, as I most surely will,
Me will salute the thirst-dispelling grape,

Purple or opal, and when noon is still,
The snow-cold fruit provoke permitted rape.
Even, dear land, flourish thy fortunes so,
Which, formed, need only interval to grow.

DESENZANO, *May* 1863.



BY THE FATES.

By the fates that have fastened our life,
By the distance that holds us apart,
By our passion, its sweetness, its strife,
By the longing and ache of the heart ;
By our meeting, our parting, our pain
When meeting and parting are o'er,—
Take me hence to where once I have lain,
Ere I die of despair and disdain,
I implore !

'Tis in vain that you bid me be calm.
Can we bridle our pulses at will ?

Is fasting for hunger a balm ?
Can emptiness emptiness fill ?
Shall I wait till I shrivel with fire,
Till I perish of parching and thirst ?
Shall I make of my passion a pyre,
And, martyred by drouth and desire,
Die accursed ?

I appeal to the hills which beheld
The dawning, the day of our love ;
To the moon, when our bosoms first swelled
With its birth, that watched fondly above ;
To the city surpassingly fair,
To the revel, the rapture divine,
That flooded the earth and the air
When our mutinous secret lay bare,—
Am I thine ?

Will you leave me to faint and to fall,
Plunge me back in the slough of despond ?

Shall I be to earth's darkness a thrall,
 When I see a whole heaven beyond ?
Shall you, who might waken my shell,
 Consign it to silence and shame,
And, just as the notes 'gin to swell,
With your hands smite the chords, and dispel
 All its fame ?

Be this, at your bidding, our doom,
 Together, then, break we our chains !
There is hope, there is rest, in the tomb,
 When in life nought but anguish remains.
If love be but one torment more,
 Oh, come then the gulf or the glaive !
Let us live our delirium once o'er,
Just once, then the comfort explore
 Of the grave !

BLANCHE.

BREEZE ! brisk breeze ! that movest with the morn !
Breeze ! lithe breeze ! that creepest through the corn !
Breeze ! O breeze ! that fannest the forlorn !
Oh linger by the lattice of sweet Blanche of mine !

Breeze ! coy breeze ! that loiterest for noon !
Breeze ! true breeze ! that hast a tryst with June !
Breeze ! kind breeze ! I beg of thee a boon !
Oh peep in through the lattice of poor Blanche of
mine !

Breeze ! fleet breeze ! that goest with the day !

Breeze ! dear breeze ! that hastenest away !

Breeze ! breeze ! breeze ! I beg of thee to stay,

And breathe upon the pillow of pale Blanche of
mine !

Breeze ! night-breeze ! that wailest on the wold !

Breeze ! lost breeze ! that wanderest in the cold !

Breeze ! dread breeze ! oh flit not by the mould

Which shelters what is left me of lost Blanche of
mine !

IN SUTTON WOODS.

THERE—peace once more ; the restless roar
Of troubled cities dies away.

“Welcome to our broad shade once more,”
The dear old woodlands seem to say.

The sweet suggestions of the wind,
That spake in whispers, now are stilled ;
The songless branches all remind
That summer's glory is fulfilled.

The petulant plaint of falling leaves
Dimples the leaden pool awhile ;
So Age, impassive, but receives
Youth's tale of troubles with a smile.

O fallen leaves ! O feelings dead !
O dimpled pool ! O scornful lips !
O hardening of the heart and head !—
The summer's and the soul's eclipse !

Thus, as the seasons slip away,
How much is schemed, how little done !
What splendid plans at break of day !
What void regrets at set of sun !

The world goes round, for you, for me,
For him who sits, for him who strives,
And the great Fates indifferent see
The rage or respite of our lives.

Then fall, ye leaves ! die out, thou breeze !
Grow sedges thick on every pool !
Let each old rushing impulse freeze,
Let each old generous friendship cool.

It is not love, it is not worth,
Self-sacrifice, or yearnings true,
Make the dull devotees of earth
Prostrate themselves and worship you.

The savage consciousness of powers,
The selfish purpose, stubborn will,
Have ever, in this world of ours,
Achieved success—achieve it still.

Farewell, ye woods ! no more I sit ;
Great voices in the distance call :
If this be peace—enough of it.
I go. Fall, unseen foliage, fall !

SONNET. 6

MY soul is sunk in all-suffusing shame ;
Yet not for any individual sin,
But that the world's original fair fame—
My own land's most—is not what it hath been.
Shrieks of intolerable bondage smite,
Without response, its comfortable ears,
Making a craven compromise with Might,
For their own luxury, of others' tears.
Better than this the sanguinary crash
Of fratricidal strokes, and nerveful hate !

So do I hope to hear the sabres clash
And tumbrils rattle when the snows abate.
Love peace who will—I for mankind prefer,
To dungeon or disgrace, a sepulchre.



ASPRROMONTE.⁷

So you think he is defeated, O ye comfortably seated,
And that Victory is meted in your loaded huckster's
scales ?

O ye fools ! though justice tarry, yet by heaven broad
and starry,
Right, howe'er it may miscarry, ere the end arrive,
prevails.

And you think a wounded hero may hereafter count
as zero,
And that every desperate Nero rules the cities
which he burns ;

That a wild steed caught and snaffled means a nation
wholly baffled,
And its future may be raffled in your diplomatic
urns !

Well, then, know we would not barter this our never-
flinching martyr
For the very largest charter we could coax from
"Right Divine,"
That his blood upon your ermine only makes us more
determine
To exterminate the vermin who have baulked his
grand design.

Dolts ! upon successful traitor vengeance groweth
only greater,
Not one whit less sure, the later the account may
be delayed,

And will one day have its grip on every decorated
fripon,

Though he loudly laugh and lip on, whilst the
world is plunged in shade.

And I pray ye, O ye people ! trust in palace nor in
steeple !

If you sow ill you will reap ill, to your misery and
scorn ;

In your generation wiser, know that vows of priest and
kaiser

Only supple cheats and lies are, to be broken swift
as sworn.

But have faith that Time the Scourger will be even
with the perjure,

When shall greener be the verdure upon Aspro-
monte's slope,

When the populations fitted to be wholly manumitted,
Shall be trampled nor outwitted, or by Emperor or
Pope.

And no longer forced to tremble, or whilst cursing to
dissemble,
Shall free Italy assemble, 'neath a new and grander
dome;
Grander far than that of Peter, wherein Liberty shall
seat her,
By his martyrdom completer who first struck for
"Death or Rome!"

LET US FLY!



LET us fly ! It is long past eleven ;
The watch-dogs are silent ; the moon
Hath all but abandoned the heaven,
And midnight is sinking in swoon.
Not a chirp to be heard in the thicket ;
The kine are asleep in the byre ;
All is hushed ; here I stand at the wicket,
Alone, with my pulses on fire.

There ! silently close you the lattice !
Now daintily drop we the latch !
What is that ? O my pretty one ! that is
A sparrow that moved in the thatch.

Quick ! a hasty foot over the orchard !

The horses are saddled beyond.

To-night 'tis our fate to be tortured,

To-morrow night nothing but fond !

Yet I pause. O my Mabel ! my beauty !

If they who sleep tranquil within

But knew how Love wrestles with Duty,

They weakness would call it, not sin !

If they, the calm clients of virtue,

But once on your bosom had throbbed,

They would swear 'twas a crime to desert you,

And pardon the felon that robbed.

No ! Sooner the shade of the cypress

Stretch premature over your tomb,

Than the tread of the slanderous vipress,

Should, pitiless, darken your doom !

And in the last Grand Accusation

For selfishness, falsehood, or sloth,

This act of sublime abnegation
Shall, trumpet-tongued, plead for us both.

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Giacomo ! back to the stable ;
I shan't want the horses to-night.
And see you be gentle with Mabel ;
It is not her temper, but fright.
Soft and warm, deep and broad, be her litter,
And her mane most caressingly curled.

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O God ! love is sweet, loss is bitter,
And I am alone in the world !

GRATA JUVENTAS.

SHE trembles when I touch
The tips of scarce-grown fingers,
Yet seems to think it overmuch
If for a moment lingers
Grasp that I hardly meant for such.

She clutcheth toy or book,
Or female hand beside her ;
Now with askant, unsettled look,
Inviteth, then doth hide her,
Like struggling lily in a brook.

Anon she darteth glance
 Athwart averted shoulder ;
But when encouraged I advance,
 Asudden waxing colder,
Her gaze lacks all significance.

O were she younger still,
 Or more than a beginner,
I might control my troubled will,
 Or give it rein and win her :
But now she is nor good nor ill.

S O N N E T.

THE flower, full blown, now bends the stalk, now
breaks ;

The mellow fruit inclines the bough to earth ;

The brow which thought impregnates oft times aches ;

Death-stricken is the womb in giving birth.

Cracked is the vase by heat which doth illume,

The driest logs the swiftest burn to nought,

Sweet flowers are stifled by their own perfume,

And bees when honey-clogged are easy caught.

Snapped are true chords e'en by the note they give,

The largest wave is broken by its weight,

Choked by its sheer sufficiency the sieve,
And blunted soon the shaft which flieth straight.
And so the largest mind and richest soul
Are always most amenable to dole.



THE CHALLENGE ANSWERED.⁸

So at length the word is uttered which the vain Gaul
long hath muttered
'Twixt his teeth, by envy fluttered at another land
being great ;
And the dogs of war are loosèd, and the carnage-
stream unsluicèd,
That the might of France abusèd may torment the
world like Fate.

O thou nation, base, besotted, whose ambition can-
nons shotted,
And huge mounds of corpses clotted with cold gore
alone can sate !

May the God of Battles shiver every arrow in thy
quiver,
And the nobly-flowing river thou dost covet drown
thy hate !

For 'tis writ on towering steeple, if ye sow ill ye shall
reap ill ;
And a stern offended people swarm from city, hill,
and plain,
And with lips ne'er known to palter, swear by king
and hearth and altar,
Not to sheath the sword or falter till they flash it by
the Seine !

See ! they come in dazzling masses from soft vales and
frowning passes,
Dense with blades as now the grass is that the summer
sun doth shine,

And proclaim with voice of thunder that French
hordes athirst for plunder
Not one single rood shall sunder from their Father-
land and Rhine.

Swabian, Saxon, Frank, and Hessian, lo ! they muster,
form, and press on,
Pledged to teach the Gaul the lesson he ne'er learns
but through the sword,
That the gay light-hearted glitter of the wicked, wan-
ton hitter
May be turned to wormwood bitter by the judgment
of the Lord.

To their maids no longer fickle, down whose cheeks
the fond tears trickle,
Leaving pruning-hook and sickle, yellow corn and
purple grape,

Do they vow, as long as shielded behind swords by
Germans wielded,
That their soil shall ne'er be yielded to the tiger and
the ape.

On, then! on, ye souls undaunted! let the flag of Right
be flaunted,
And your late-roused wrath be haunted by the out-
rages of old,
When for empty Gallic glory were your hearths made
black and gory,
And the lone sire's head turned hoary by the slaughter
of his fold.

Nor with glorious defending to your ire be there an
ending,
But, still onwards ever wending, let your legions never
halt,

Till ye show to braggart Paris what at hand the edge
of war is,
How it desolates and harries, and then strew its
streets with salt.

For its lips are seared with lying, and its crimes to
God are crying,
And the Earth oppressed is sighing: Oh how long
shall these things be?
And a shout of exultation will go up from every
nation,
As your sword, the World's salvation, smites the in-
sultor to his knee.

July 20, 1870.

MADONNA.

LET me, calm face, remain
For ever in these sweet sequestered nooks,
Remote from pain,
Where leafy laurustinus overlooks
The blue abounding main.

Ne'er will I crave, I vow,
Your loveliness despite, that we may stand
More nigh than now ;
You, with the fresh-plucked roses in your hand,
And I with inclined brow.

With air, and sea, and sky,
And penetrative music on the beach,
All that is high,
And far, and holy, and beyond our reach,
I you identify.

Then, lady, let me stay,
Here where no storm nor surge of discontent
Can find its way ;
Hearkening your holy admonitions, blent
With murmurs from the bay.

F A R E W E L L.

FAREWELL ! I breathe that wonted prayer,
But oh ! though countless leagues divide
Our gaze, our grasp, they shall not tear
My soul, my spirit, from thy side.
Waking or sleeping, thou shalt own
My fervour hovers round thee still ;
And when thou deem'st thyself alone,
My whispers shall the silence fill.

And as, in summer's ardent days,
The sun withdraws not all his light,
But, long past setting, twilight rays,
Lingering, illumine half the night ;

So shall our Love's enduring glow
Through lonely hours its radiance pour,
O'er our dark lot some comfort throw,
Until we blend and burn once more.



SONNET.

BECAUSE I failed, shall I asperse the End
With scorn or doubt, my failure to excuse ;
'Gainst arduous Truth my feeble falseness use,
Like that worst foe, a vain splenetic friend ?
Deem'st thou, self-amorous fool, the High will bend
If that thy utmost stature prove too small ?
Though thou be dwarf, some other is more tall.
The End is fixed ; have faith ; the means will mend.
Failures but carve a pathway to success ;
Our force is many, so our aim be one :

The foremost drop ; on, those behind must press.
What boots my doing, so the deed be done ?
Let my poor body lie beneath the breach :
I clomb and fell ; who stand on me will reach.



CHRISTMAS, 1870.

HEAVEN strews the earth with snow,
That neither friend nor foe
May break the sleep of the fast-dying year ;
A world arrayed in white,
Late dawns, and shrouded light,
Attest to us once more that Christmas-tide is here.

And yet, and yet I hear
No strains of pious cheer,
No children singing round the Yule-log fire ;

No carol's sacred notes,
Warbled by infant throats,
On brooding mother's lap, or knee of pleased sire.

Comes with the hallowed time
No sweet accustomed chime,
No peal of bells athwart the midnight air ;
No mimes or jocund waits
Within wide-opened gates,
Loud laughter in the hall, or glee of children fair.

No loving cup sent round ?
No footing of the ground ?
No sister's kiss under the berried bough ?
No chimney's joyous roar,
No hospitable store,
Though it be Christmas-tide, to make us note it now ?

No ! only human hate,
And fear, and death, and fate,
And fierce hands locked in fratricidal strife ;
The distant hearth stripped bare
By the gaunt guest, Despair,
Pale groups of pining babes round lonely-weeping wife.

Can it be Christmas-tide ?
The snow with blood is dyed,
From human hearts wrung out by human hands.
Hark ! did not sweet bells peal ?
No ! 'twas the ring of steel,
The clang of armed men and shock of murderous
bands.

Didst Thou, then, really come ?—
Silence that dreadful drum !—
Christ ! Saviour ! Babe, of lowly Virgin born !

If Thou, indeed, Most High,
Didst in a manger lie,
Then be the Prince of Peace, and save us from Hell's
scorn.

We weep if men deny
That Thou didst live and die,
Didst ever walk upon this mortal sphere ;
Yet of Thy Passion, Lord !
What know these times abhorred,
Save the rude soldier's stripes, sharp sponge, and
piercing spear ?

Therefore we, Father, plead,
Grant us in this our need
Another Revelation from Thy throne,
That we may surely know
We are not sons of woe,
Forgotten and cast off, but verily Thine own.

Yet if He came anew,
Where, where would shelter due
Be found for load divine and footsteps sore ?
Here, not the inns alone,
But fold and stable groan
With sterner guests than drove sad Mary from the
door.

And thou, 'mong women blest,
Who laidst, with awe-struck breast,
Thy precious babe upon the lowly straw,
Now for thy new-born Son
Were nook and cradle none,
If not in bloody trench or cannon's smoking jaw.

Round her what alien rites,
What savage sounds and sights—
The plunging war-horse and sulphureous match.

Than such as these, alas !
Better the ox, the ass,
The manger's crib secure and peace-bestowing thatch.

The trumpet's challenge dire
Would hush the angelic choir,
The outpost's oath replace the Shepherd's vow ;
No frankincense or myrrh
Would there be brought to her,
For Wise Men kneel no more—Kings are not humble
now.

O Lord ! O Lord ! how long ?
Thou that art good, art strong,
Put forth Thy strength, Thy ruling love declare ;
Stay Thou the smiting hand,
Invert the flaming brand,
And teach the proud to yield, the omnipotent to
spare.



Renew our Christmas-tide !
Let weeping eyes be dried,
Love bloom afresh, bloodshed and frenzy cease !
And at Thy bidding reign,
As in the heavenly strain,
Glory to God on high ! on earth perpetual peace !

VERSAILLES.



A LAST REQUEST.

LET not the roses lie

Too thickly tangled round my tomb,
Lest fleecy clouds that skim the summer sky,
Flinging their faint soft shadows, pass it by,
And know not over whom.

And let not footsteps come

Too frequent round that nook of rest ;
Should I—who knoweth?—not be deaf, though dumb,
Bird's idle pipe, or bee's laborious hum,
Would suit me, listening, best.

And, pray you, do not hew
Words to provoke a smile or sneer ;
But only carve—at least if they be true—
These simple words, or some such, and as few,
“ He whom we loved lies here.”

And if you only could
Find out some quite sequestered slope
That, girt behind with undeciduous wood,
In front o'erlooks the ocean—then I should
Die with a calmer hope.

And if you will but so
This last request of mine fulfil,
I rest your debtor for the final throw
And if I can but help you where I go,
Be sure, fond friends, I will.

NAPLES.

NOTES

NOTES.

¹ THE inscription on Shelley's grave, and the history of Cor Cordium, are too well known to need any explanation here. When I first visited that sacred spot, the words were wellnigh illegible, and not a flower smiled above the neglected tomb. With some hesitation, but unable to resist a natural impulse, I took upon myself a sweet, but, I fear, too sacred charge, and empowered the *custode* of the cemetery to cleanse the stone of obliterating moss, and to lavish upon the grave every floral care, consistent with simplicity, till I should once more visit Rome. Returning in the autumn of 1865, I found that a female relative of the poet had recently been to the cemetery, and had kindly condoned my intrusion. Since that time, till at least the spring of 1870, when I last paid a pilgrimage thither, everything that affection and reverence can do to mark the holy ground has been done.

The reader will perceive from the date attached to the

poem that French troops then occupied the Eternal City, and their favourite locality for drum and trumpet practising was the neighbourhood of the Protestant Cemetery.

* At the Porta di San Lorenzo, as indeed in a thousand places in Rome, is a little metal cross let into the archway of the gate, which the passer-by is solicited to kiss, by the inducement that he will thereby acquit his soul, on its reaching the shores of the next world, of a hundred days' quarantine in Purgatory. If generously-minded, however, he may transform the prospective benefit to himself into an immediate benefit to some soul already undergoing that painful delay; and this transfer of acquired advantage is strongly urged upon the devout. The Epigram these few words are intended to elucidate was composed under the circumstances stated in the context.

* "To Arms" was composed at the moment when it was fondly hoped that European intervention might render not wholly fruitless the gallant sacrifices of the last Polish Insurrection. The author makes no claims to prophetic insight, but he cannot well fail to note that the curses which he prayed might descend upon France and Austria, if they shrank from a performance of their duty, have been literally fulfilled. He abstained from calling down any maledictions on his own country; but

a curse more potent than any he can command has flagrantly followed on our comfortable toleration of an appalling public crime. We refused to strike a blow for Poland, and, in order to be even with us, France refused to strike a blow for Denmark. The Prussians have since been to Paris, and Russia has torn up and flung in our face the last barrier that kept her from Constantinople.

⁴ *Chi è?* is the old but still subsisting form of salutation that greets you if you knock or ring at a Roman door. It is a poor protection, but has a pretty sound.

Terzo piano, third floor. *Facchino*, a porter. *Cara lei*—literally, dear she. *Io*, I.

⁵ Horat., Od. II. Car. v., where the words cited occur, though with a somewhat different application to the one I have here ventured to give them.

⁶ This Sonnet was also called forth by the self-interested patience with which Europe, and England more especially, witnessed the perhaps final extinction of Poland.

⁷ The first tidings of the incident of Aspromonte reached England in these terms,—“Garibaldi has been defeated, wounded, and captured.” The poem which bears its name in this volume still thoroughly expresses